

SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE INFORMATION OFFICE OF
THE ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA IN WASHINGTON, DC

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APRIL 5, 2011

FOREIGN RELATIONS

GCC Foreign Ministers condemn Iranian interference

The Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held a special session at the headquarters of the GCC General Secretariat in Riyadh on April 3, with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait. The Ministerial Council expressed deep concern over the continuation of Iranian interference in the internal affairs of GCC countries. It condemned Iranian actions aimed at undermining the security and spreading division and sectarian strife in GCC countries. In particular, the Council criticized Iran's blatant interference in the affairs of Kuwait through the planting of spy networks in Kuwait. The ministers denounced the false accusations contained in the irresponsible statement issued by the Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy of the Iranian Shoura Council regarding Saudi Arabia, characterizing the statement as a hostile and provocative attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of GCC countries.

For its part, the Saudi Majlis Al-Shoura (Consultative Council) issued a statement on April 3 strongly denouncing the assertion by the Iranian Committee that the Kingdom is interfering in Bahrain's internal affairs. Making such false accusations will only serve to ignite sectarian strife, the statement warned. Pointing out the hypocrisy of Iran's allegations, it added, "While Iran blatantly intervenes in the affairs of the region, the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Parliament accuses the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of interventions." The statement stressed that **upsetting the security and stability of any GCC member state constitutes direct harm to the security and stability of all GCC member states, as stipulated in various written agreements.**

COUNTERTERRORISM

BIP: 5,080 people investigated or prosecuted for terrorist crimes

A spokesman for the Saudi Bureau of Investigation and Prosecution (BIP) said in a statement on April 2 that a total of 5,080 people have been convicted or are in the process of being investigated or prosecuted by the BIP for terrorism-related crimes. To date, 2,215 defendants have been referred to the court; 1,612 of those have received sentences, while 603 cases are still pending. The statement added, "The BIP is currently finalizing the lists of charges of public prosecutions for 934 defendants,

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and is completing the investigation in cases involving 1,931 suspects, in preparation for completing the necessary procedures for transferring them to the competent criminal court."

EMBASSY ACTIVITY

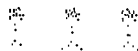
Ambassador Al-Jubeir meets with Majlis Al-Shoura delegation

Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir met in Washington on April 3 with a delegation of the Majlis Al-Shoura, headed by Osama Al-Kurdi. During the meeting, Ambassador Al-Jubeir highlighted the deep-rooted, strategic partnership that has bound the Kingdom and the U.S. together for the past 70 years, encompassing the political, economic, educational and cultural arenas. He affirmed that bilateral relations are based upon institutionalized foundations characterized by transparency, clarity and mutual respect. Ambassador Al-Jubeir commended the commitment of the Saudi leadership to bolstering relations with the U.S., while also pointing out the importance the American leadership places upon Saudi Arabia as a regional power. The Ambassador praised the exchange of delegations between the two countries, asserting that these visits expand the dimensions of the Saudi-U.S. relationship. Moreover, he disclosed that the number of Saudi students on scholarships in the U.S. has now reached 40,000 – up from only 3,000 students a few years ago.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi researchers identify gene linked to colorectal carcinoma

Researchers at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center (KFSH&RC) in Riyadh have identified genes that potentially play an important role in the progression of colorectal carcinoma (CRC). In a scientific article featured in the February issue of the American Journal of Pathology, entitled "Genome-Wide Expression Analysis of Middle Eastern Colorectal Cancer Reveals FOXM1 as a Novel Target for Cancer Therapy," the research team reported that they had managed to suppress the activity of the gene during laboratory experiments. During the breakthrough study, the researchers conducted gene scanning of cancerous samples taken from Saudi patients suffering from colorectal cancer and compared them with healthy samples. This process enabled them to identify a gene called FOXM1, which has an effective and active role in cancerous cells. Then, the team was able to suppress the activity of the gene using a chemical substance resembling an antibiotic.



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MARCH 29, 2011

FOREIGN RELATIONS

King Abdullah speaks to leaders of Bahrain, Lebanon and Syria

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz made a telephone call on March 23 to Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa. During their conversation, the two leaders discussed bilateral relations and the latest developments in the region. The Saudi King reiterated his country's support for stability and security in Bahrain.

King Abdullah also received a telephone call on March 23 from Lebanese President Michel Suleiman, with whom he discussed bilateral relations and regional issues. Then, on March 28, King Abdullah placed a call to Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. The two leaders reviewed bilateral relations, the events in Syria and the latest developments in the Arab world. King Abdullah expressed his concern for Syria and its people.

Prince Saud Al-Faisal meets with leaders of Britain, Russia and Egypt

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal arrived on March 23 in London, where he held a meeting at Downing Street with British Prime Minister David Cameron. Their conversation focused on bilateral relations and developments in the Middle East. Before his session with the Prime Minister, the Saudi Foreign Minister met with his British counterpart, William Hague.

On March 25, Prince Saud was received by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev at the Kremlin. During the audience, Prince Saud delivered a message to the Russian leader from King Abdullah addressing bilateral relations. Then they discussed a number of issues of common interest, especially the situation in the Middle East. Later, the Saudi Foreign Minister arrived in Cairo for a one day trip to Egypt. During his visit, Prince Saud met with Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Egyptian Armed Forces Field Marshall Mohammed Hussein Tantawi. He was also received by Secretary General of the Arab League Amr Mousa, with whom he discussed regional events and the necessity of coordinating joint Arab action.

ECONOMY

More than \$21 billion expected to be invested in power-related projects

Senior officials of the Saudi Electricity Company (SEC) said during the 2011 Jeddah Economic Forum on March 22 that power-related projects designed to meet the Kingdom's electricity needs over the next few years are expected to cost \$21.33 billion. The Saudi private sector will be asked to implement a number of them, he noted, adding that this year's projects alone are estimated to cost as much as \$8 billion.

SAUDI ARABIA

Princess Mashael wins U.N. Water for Life Award

The Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health (GIWEH) has announced that Princess Mashael bint Mohammed Saud Abdulrahman has won the United Nation's "Water for Life, Best Practice Award," becoming the first Arab researcher to receive a U.N. scientific award. The prize was presented at an international forum entitled "Sustainable Water Use and Management, Leadership for Positive Change" held on March 22 at the U.N. office in Geneva. Princess Mashael is a pioneering researcher in the field of applied geomorphology at the Space Research Institute at the King Abdullah City of Science and Technology (KACST). She won the U.N. prize for her distinguished efforts in and innovative approaches towards water research. She has contributed to numerous studies on environmental issues, especially in the field of environmental disasters, such as earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, floods and desertification. Princess Mashael also has conducted several studies aimed at achieving sustainable development in Saudi Arabia through modern technology.

FOREIGN AID

Arab financed road in central Mauritania opens

An Arab-funded road linking two cities in central Mauritania was inaugurated on March 24. The 365 km road, which cost about \$141 million to build, was financed by several Arab countries, including the Kingdom. In a statement to the Saudi Press Agency, a Mauritanian minister thanked the Kingdom for its contribution to the project.

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SAUDI ARABIA

King Abdullah addresses nation, announces new initiatives

During a televised speech on March 18, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz announced a series of royal decrees to help improve the welfare of the Saudi people. The decrees will increase benefits, create new law enforcement jobs at the Ministry of Interior, provide funds for new housing projects, and expand health care facilities.

"King Abdullah has continuously demonstrated his commitment to his people through unprecedented reforms in all areas of their lives including housing, employment and health care," said Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir.

The royal decrees include: payment of two-month's salary to public sector personnel and two month's stipend to public higher education students; payment of \$533 per month for job seekers; increase in the minimum wage in the public sector to \$800 per month; construction of 500,000 residential units across the Kingdom; increase in the maximum amount of interest free loans issued by the Real Estate Development Fund from \$80,000 to \$133,333 per applicant; establishment of a National Commission on Combating Corruption; provision of \$4.3 billion to implement and expand medical projects; and creation of 60,000 law enforcement jobs at the Ministry of Interior.

SAUDI ARABIA-U.S. RELATIONS

King Abdullah receives telephone call from U.S. President

King Abdullah received a telephone call from U.S. President Barack Obama on March 16. During the conversation, they discussed bilateral relations and the latest developments in the region, including the situation in Bahrain.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Bahraini King receives Prince Saud Al-Faisal

Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa received Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal in Manama on March 14. In a statement carried by the official Bahrain News Agency, King Hamad praised the decision by King Abdullah to send troops

to Bahrain as part of a joint Peninsula Shield Force. The decision of the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to send their forces to assist Bahrain is the result of the activation of the joint defense cooperation agreements between GCC countries and evidence of the deep ties and mutual interests of these nations, King Hamad noted. He added, "We in Bahrain welcome the servicemen of the Peninsula Shield Force, as dear brothers in their country, Bahrain. We founded the force for joint GCC actions. The force played an important and historical role in the liberation of Kuwait." For his part, Prince Saud reaffirmed the Kingdom's commitment to Bahrain's stability and security, which are integral to the stability and security of Saudi Arabia.

FOREIGN AID

Algerian conjoined twins successfully separated

A pair of Algerian conjoined twins, Sarah and Ikram, successfully underwent separation surgery on March 17 at the King Abdulaziz Medical City (KAMC) in Riyadh. Minister of Health Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, who led the surgical team, gave reporters an account of the complicated procedure, which involved nine phases. Algerian Ambassador to the Kingdom Alhabeeb Adami thanked King Abdullah, who ordered the surgery to take place in the Kingdom at his own expense. Last week's operation brought the total number of successful separation surgeries that have been performed on conjoined twins in Riyadh to 29.

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March 15, 2011

ARAB WORLD

Arab foreign ministers call for no-fly zone over Libya

The foreign ministers of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held their 118th ordinary meeting in Abu-Dhabi on March 7. In a statement issued afterwards, the GCC states called for a no-fly zone to be established over Libya to help protect civilians. The ministers condemned the Libyan government's crimes against its people. The GCC states called upon the Libyan authorities to immediately **stop using force against its civilians**, and **facilitate the arrival of humanitarian aid** and allow the aspirations of the Libyan people to be realized.

The Arab Foreign Ministers, including Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal, convened an emergency meeting at the Arab League's headquarters in Cairo on March 12 to address the crisis in Libya and coordinate responses. The ministers agreed that the bloodshed must stop and that the territorial integrity of Libya must be maintained. To this end, they called upon the U.N. Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya to help end the Qaddafi government's brutality.

Prince Saud addresses regional unrest

Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal held a press conference in Jeddah on March 9, during which he stressed the Kingdom's absolute rejection of foreign interference in its internal affairs and steadfast opposition to any infringement upon its Islamic principles. The Foreign Minister maintained that the Kingdom's laws and regulations are based on Shariah (Islamic law) and are meant to ensure the country's security, stability and integrity. Referring to the declarations from the Council of Senior Ulama [Council of Senior Scholars] and the Grand Mufti prohibiting public protests, Prince Saud said, "These statements stressed the necessity to stand by the interests of society and emphasized that reform and advice cannot be made through demonstrations and methods that raise sedition and cause disunity."

Asked about the unrest occurring in a number of Arab countries, Prince Saud replied, "I think each country has its characteristics and each country is different than the other; thus, we cannot treat their circumstances collectively as if it is a common phenomenon. There are 22 Arab states. For four or five of them to face similar events in some aspects should not be out of the ordinary, but the method of treating them should be different." Questioned about whether events in the region are being instigated by foreign intervention, Prince Saud said, "The external intervention is obvious ... whether it is the main cause or not, I think each country has its peculiar

conditions in this context."

He added, "Change comes by the citizens of this country and not through [foreign] theories." Asked about reports that Iran is trying to stir unrest inside the Kingdom, Prince Saud said, "As for Iran, we hope it deals only with the demonstrations in its own country. We do not have demonstrations like those in Iran, and I repeat what I have said before, that we will not tolerate any interference in our internal affairs by any party whatsoever ... Had the Kingdom spotted any interference, we would have dealt with them decisively."

On the issue of Libya, Prince Saud stated, "I have declared that the objective is to stem the bleeding and maintain the unity of Libya." In response to reports circulated by a number of foreign newspapers regarding a U.S. request for the Kingdom to arm or finance the revolutionaries in Libya, he said, "I've never heard such reports nor imagined that."

COUNTERTERRORISM

GCC provides \$20 billion in support for Bahrain and Oman

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) foreign ministers concluded their meeting in Riyadh on March 10 with a pledge of a \$20 billion economic support package over 10 years for Bahrain and Oman. The countries will each receive \$10 billion for economic development.

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MARCH 8, 2011

SAUDI ARABIA

Senior Scholars Council issues statement on demonstrations

The Council of Senior Ulema [Council of Senior Scholars] issued a statement on March 5 in which it called for national solidarity to protect the country against regional turmoil. Maintaining the unity of the *Ummah* [nation] is one of the greatest pillars of Islam, it emphasized. Throughout its progress and advancement, the Kingdom has managed to preserve its Islamic identity, the Council said, adding that the Kingdom will never allow any incoming ideology, neither from the West nor from the East, to distort its identity or wreak havoc on the community. The statement warned against deviant intellectual and partisan links and insisted that reform must come through the proper channels, not by issuing threats and inciting strife.

The Majlis Al-Shura (Consultative Council) endorsed the Council of Senior Ulema's statement during its meeting on March 7. The Speaker of the Majlis, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Asheikh, noted that the Kingdom has a unique open-door approach in which Saudis may write directly to the leadership or any official to offer comments or make requests.

SAUDI ARABIA-U.S. RELATIONS

PMU, UCF sign agreement to establish Saudi-U.S. Institute

Prince Mohammed bin Fahd University (PMU) has signed an agreement with the University of Central Florida (UCF) to establish a Saudi-U.S. Institute concerned with the development of bilateral relations. The institute will focus on a variety of topics, including regional cooperation, the definition of Islam and Islamic civilization in Western societies and the management of resources such as energy, water and the environment. The institute will also examine the image of Saudi Arabia and its contributions to contemporary civilization. Among the proposed activities of the center is the hosting of conferences, seminars and workshops involving specialists in fields of common interest to both the Kingdom and the U.S.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Saudi Foreign Minister meets with Egyptian military leader

Field Marshal Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, Commander in Chief and Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Egyptian Armed Forces, received Foreign Minister

Prince Saud Al-Faisal in Cairo on March 2. During their meeting, bilateral relations were discussed, specifically ways in which the Kingdom can contribute to political and economic stability in Egypt. In a statement afterwards, Prince Saud expressed the appreciation of the Saudi government and people for the performance of the Egyptian Armed Forces in managing their country's crisis, wishing them success in the coming period.

Saudi-Qatari Coordination Council concludes meeting

The Saudi-Qatari Coordination Council (SQCC) concluded its third session in Riyadh on March 1 under the co-chairmanship of Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, the Crown Prince of Qatar. The two countries signed four agreements and memoranda of understanding covering security cooperation, anti-drug efforts and meteorology. Afterwards, the Council issued a joint statement commending Saudi-Qatari cooperation and stressing the importance of achieving unity between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The two sides emphasized the importance of strengthening coordination between security departments in both countries to maintain stability in the region, particularly in the fight against terrorism. The Qatari side expressed its desire to open a communication channel between the commands of the border guards of the Qatari Armed Forces and the General Directorate of Border Guards of the Saudi Ministry of Interior.

FOREIGN AID

Algerian conjoined twins arrive in Riyadh

Upon the directives of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, a pair of Algerian conjoined twins arrived March 2 in Riyadh, where they will undergo medical examinations at the King Abdulaziz Medical City (KAMC) to determine whether separation surgery is possible. The girls, Ikram and Sara, were accompanied to the Kingdom by their parents.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

OIC strongly condemns use of "excessive force" against civilians in Libya

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has expressed its strong condemnation of the use of excessive force against civilians in Libya, which has killed and injured a large number of people. "What is happening in Libya is suppression and intimidation, and it is a humanitarian disaster incompatible with Islamic and human values," the OIC said in a statement. OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu called on the Libyan authorities for the immediate cessation of violence and the targeting of innocent people, highlighting the need to deal with their demands through peaceful means and dialogue instead of the harsh methods of lethality and bloodshed.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia began evacuating its citizens from Libya last week. The first plane chartered by the government arrived in Riyadh on Feb. 23 from Tripoli, carrying Saudis and citizens of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

Prince Nayef attends Kuwaiti anniversary celebrations

On behalf of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Second Deputy Prime Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz attended the national celebrations of Kuwait on Feb. 26, marking the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its independence, the 20th anniversary of its liberation and the 5th anniversary of the ascension to power of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

SAUDI ARABIA-U.S. RELATIONS

Saudi, U.S. militaries hold joint exercises

A joint Saudi-U.S. military exercise, dubbed "Friendship II," was held in the southern region of the Kingdom on Feb. 28. Addressing the gathering, Commander of the Southern Region Maj. Gen. Ali Zaid Khawaji said that the joint exercises help maintain the army's preparedness, while confirming the strength of relations between the Kingdom and the United States.

FOREIGN AID

IDB allocates \$250 million to curb poverty and create jobs

The Executive Managers Council of the Jeddah-based International Development Bank (IDB) announced on Feb. 28 that it will appropriate \$250 million to help member parties provide support for investments aimed at curbing poverty and creating job opportunities for youths.